

Peer support is rooted in the belief that no one needs to travel their healthcare journey alone, and those of you developing or expanding Peer Mentor programs are in good company on that road. Health systems across the country are integrating peer support and peer advisory programs, so your interest is part of a growing trend.

Here at University of Michigan Health System, we have ongoing or developing Peer Mentor programs in the following areas:

- Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT)
- Congenital Heart Center
- Critical Care Medical Unit (CCMU)
- Cranial Facial Anomalies
- Disorders of Sex Development Program
- Pediatric Epilepsy
- Heart Transplant
- Implantable Cardiac Device (ICD) and Cardiovascular Center (CVC)
- Pediatric Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)
- Kidney Transplant
- Limb Loss
- Liver Transplant
- Lung Transplant
- Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)
- Pediatric Oncology
- Scleroderma
- Spinal Injury (PM&R)
- Trauma/Burn - Survivors Offering Assistance in Recovery (SOAR)

Program Success Factors

Creating a Peer Mentor program is an intensive, coordinated team effort, and the more sustainable peer support programs share certain success factors:

- Clinicians and staff understand the value of peer support, refer patients and families, and recruit Peer Mentors
- One Peer Mentor coordinator is responsible for managing the program, along with other staff members who support the coordinator, such as a nurse manager who helps identify patients requesting a Peer Mentor
- Peer Mentors reflect the diversity of patients and families served
- There is ongoing supervision, support and professional development of the Peer Mentors to grow and sustain the program
- Peer Mentors are recognized and honored

Benefits and Outcomes for Patients

- Increased ability to self-manage care
- More knowledgeable, better informed
- More confident communicating with physicians and clinical staff in discussion of care options and plans
- Less anxious
- More hopeful
- Improved healthy living

Benefits and Outcomes for the Health System

- Demonstrates commitment to Patient and Family Centered Care (PFCC) values
- Peer Mentors give feedback to clinicians and staff about the patient and family experience

Peer Coordinator Core Responsibilities

Recruitment of Peer Mentors

- Make certain your cadre of Peer Mentors reflects the diversity of patients and families you hope to serve. The more diverse your core Peer Mentors, the greater capacity your program will have for matching based on patient and family health care issues and concerns.
- We have found it's best to start with **three** Peer Mentors.

How to Recruit Peer Mentors

- Targeting specific types of patients from:
 - Patient and Family Centered Care Program
 - Physicians and primary care practices
 - Specialty Care Clinic staff
 - Hospital newsletters (invite Public Relations to help)
 - Support organizations such as cancer, diabetes, heart, cystic fibrosis, mental health, etc.
- More broadly:
 - Statewide family support organizations
 - Faith Communities
 - Radio Public Service Announcement
 - Social Media

Whether through a group meeting or an individual conversation, or as part of the training, all programs must screen prospective volunteers. Key attributes of a Peer Mentor include:

- Ability to listen, understand, question, and clarify
- Non-judgmental and affirming
- Comfort with personal narrative
- Flexibility and open-minded
- Empathy
- Patience

- Time-management skills
- Clarifying expectations

Process and Format for Training Peer Mentors

We have established a quarterly Peer Mentor training session that is open to all programs. Prior to attending a session you should have the following in place:

- A dedicated staff to manage, place and support Peer Mentors.
- Three Peer Mentors to help establish your program.
- The estimated time commitment for staff per match is about 10 hours over a 3-month period.

Overview of Peer Mentor Training

Logistics

- Currently, we are capping the training groups at 12 Peer Mentors.
- General volunteer orientation is given including volunteer policies and procedures; HIPPA and confidentiality agreements are signed, background checks are collected
- Patient and Family Centered Care Training
- Peer Mentor training lasts 4-6 hours during one day
- Disease specific training and orientation 1.5 hours
- Follow-up – debriefing discussions after first contact
- On-going training can include skill-building sessions, webinars, or other online courses for continued mentor development and support

Components of Peer Mentor Training

- Personal Stories
- Active Listening and Supportive Communication
- Understanding Values and Beliefs
- Adjustment/Adaptation Process
- Problem Solving
- Community Resources
- Confidentiality
- Knowing when and how to communicate that the support you are offering may not be enough

Please feel free to reach out to Melissa Cunningham (missie@med.umich.edu), PFCC Program Volunteer Coordinator for Adult Services, or Shelly Fox (fmichele@med.umich.edu), PFCC Program Volunteer Coordinators for Children's and Women's, and Psychiatry if you have any questions.